

Mancuso makes case to be on downhill team

By USSA

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy – Lindsey Vonn (Vail, CO) continued her ascension into the elite ranks of women's skiers Saturday, notching her eighth win of the season and career 30th Audi FIS Alpine World Cup victory – including a sweep of all five downhills this season.

“It's a phenomenal achievement,” said U.S. Women's Head Coach Jim Tracy. “It's something that, when you start your career, you dream and you wonder if you can ever get to be that good. All of us are extremely proud of her.”

German rival Maria Riesch was second, 0.42 seconds behind in a slightly closer affair than Vonn's 0.67-second super G win on Friday.

“You can't just cruise down and have a solid run and be in the lead,” Vonn said. “You have to really risk something but also ski smart. I feel like I found that rhythm and know what to do. It's nice when you have the confidence in yourself to know exactly what you have to do every day. It helps so much.”

In typical Vonn fashion, she started fast and ended faster, eclipsing Riesch's early pace as five U.S. women found themselves in the points.

Vonn's win knotted her with Croatian great Janica Kostelic at eighth on the women's all-time wins list. She has three wins and eight career podiums in Cortina.

“It's a pretty special place, and we're all involved with a pretty special athlete right now,” Tracy said.

2006 gold medalist Julia Mancuso (Olympic Valley, CA) grabbed

her best finish this season in eighth place, just more than a second back of Vonn and 0.2 seconds behind third-place Anja Paerson of Sweden.

“I just wanted to be faster,” Mancuso said. “I think it was good. I was slowing down on the bottom. That’s where I lost all my time. If I didn’t lose so much on the bottom, I would have been in there.”

The eighth place finish was vital for team selection as it moved Mancuso one spot ahead of Stacey Cook’s (Mammoth Mountain, CA) ninth in Haus, Austria a week ago. It puts Mancuso into the top two for downhill selection. In addition to Cook’s ninth, Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, CO) also has a top 10 from Lake Louise, AB in the season openers.

After making a small error and taking 20th in the super G, Leanne Smith (Conway, NH) rocketed to a season-best 15th Friday and to hopefully keep herself in the running for the U.S. Olympic Ski Team, to be named Monday.

Cook also was in the points at 25th, McKennis was 28th, and Chelsea Marshall (Pittsfield, VT) tied with Slovenia’s Marusa Ferk for 30th despite going up on one ski on the difficult course.

Sunday is the final race before the Olympic Team is determined.

Cortina d’Ampezzo, Italy, Jan. 23, Women’s Downhill

1. Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO, 1:37.70

2. Maria Riesch, Germany, 1:38.12

T-3. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 1:38.56

T-3. Nadja Kamer, Switzerland, 1:38.56

T-5. Fabienne Suter, Switzerland, 1:38.58

T-5. Ingrid Jacquemod, France, 1:38.58

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8. Julia Mancuso, Olympic Valley, CA, 1:38.76

15 Leanne Smith, Conway, NH, 1:39.54

25. Stacey Cook, Mammoth Mountain, CA, 1:40.00

28. Alice McKennis, Glenwood Springs, CO, 1:40.14

T-30. Chelsea Marshall, Pittsfield, VT, 1:40.28

DNF – Keely Kelleher